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'Low Credibility' Study Claims No Link Between Cellphone Use and Brain Tumors

The COSMOS study concluded that heavy cellphone use was not associated with an increased risk of developing brain tumors. Some scientists criticized the study's methodology and suggested that funding by the telecommunications industry may have led to bias.

By Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.

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A new peer-reviewed study concluded that heavy cellphone use was not associated with an increased risk of developing brain tumors. But some critics questioned the results, citing methodological flaws and bias from industry funding.

The authors of the COSMOS study (Cohort Study on Mobile Phones and Health) promoted it as the world's largest multinational prospective cohort study on the potential health risks of cellphone use.

They said the study, published in Environmental International, found "no evidence" of increased risk for developing three common brain tumors linked to heavy cellphone use.

"Our findings to date, together with other available scientific evidence," the authors wrote, "suggest that mobile phone use is not associated with increased risk of developing these tumours."

Dr. Lennart Hardell, a leading scientist on cancer risks from radiation, told The Defender the study "lacked scientific integrity."

Hardell, an oncologist and epidemiologist with the Environment and Cancer

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Research Foundation who has authored more than 350 papers — almost 60 of which address radiofrequency (RF) radiation — said he found multiple shortcomings in its methodology and representation of the scientific literature.

"This is a product defense study, not suitable for a scientific journal claiming to have conducted a credible review of a submission," Hardell said. "Obviously the referees have not done their proper job or have not been listened to. In the latter case, it casts doubt on the scientific credibility of the very journal."

What Hardell found "most remarkable" was that the study authors failed to cite or reference important studies documenting an increased incidence of brain tumors among those who heavily used a cellphone, he said.

"It is hard to believe that the study authors are so incompetent and/or perhaps so biased towards the 'no risk' paradigm," he said. "One may rightly ask what results they are hiding — at least a clarification is needed."

"One must also ask if there is influence by industry," he added.

Mona Nilsson, co-founder and director of the Swedish Radiation Protection Foundation, said there is reason to suspect that industry influenced the COSMOS study.

In an article critiquing the study, Nilsson said telecommunication companies were the ones who initiated the study and provided some of the study's initial funding. "They have an interest in showing that mobile phones do not have negative health effects."

Additionally, the researchers who conducted the study "have a long history of dismissing evidence of health risks," she said. In her opinion, their results have "low credibility."

Despite the study's faults, Nilsson predicted it will be used "as effective evidence for the telecom industry" in lawsuits regarding brain tumors alleged to be caused by mobile phone use.

"The study will also be used in expert opinion reports as an argument that radiation from wireless technology does not cause cancer ... So the telecom industry's investment in the COSMOS study has been successful," Nilsson told The Defender.

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Methodological flaws underestimate risk

The COSMOS study included 250,000-plus participants from Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the U.K.

The researchers recruited participants between 2007-2012 and had them complete a detailed questionnaire about their lifetime mobile phone use.

Roughly seven years later, the researchers looked at cancer registries to see if any of the participants had developed one of three kinds of brain tumors: glioma, meningioma or acoustic neuroma.

Through statistical analyses, the researchers examined whether heavy cellphone use was associated with an increased risk of developing a brain tumor.

But the way they conducted their analyses was flawed, Nilsson said.

Rather than compare those who were heavily exposed to RF cellphone radiation with those who weren't exposed, the study authors compared those who were heavily exposed with those who were just less exposed.

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The authors simply split their participants into two groups based on total call time — the 50% who used their cellphones more versus the 50% who used their cellphones less — and compared those two groups.

"This leads to an underestimation of the risk," Nilsson said, "because the exposed people were not compared with unexposed people but with a group of other exposed people."

Hardell agreed and noted several other ways in which the analyses may have inaccurately minimized the risk of developing a brain tumor from RF radiation exposure.

For instance, the researchers didn't analyze which side of the head participants said they held their phone in relation to the site of the brain tumors they later detected in some participants.

"These questions are vital for studying the association between use of wireless phones and brain tumor risk," Hardell said.

They also didn't include data on cordless phone use in their analyses, even though they asked the participants detailed questions about their cordless phone use.

"This is scientific misconduct," Hardell said, "It is a shame to the participating individuals who gave of their time to answer the questionnaire."

Prior research has shown that RF radiation from both cellphones and cordless phones — which were still very much in use during the study period — can be a risk factor for developing brain tumors, so researchers must look at people's use of both, Hardell said.

Moreover, the study authors dropped 629 participants from the study because they had brain tumors before the start of the study. This could have further affected the analyses, Hardell said.

The study authors even failed to report "basic information," including how many people were initially invited to participate and the breakdown of their gender, ages and country of origin, he said. "It is remarkable that the study was published in the current version."

The COSMOS study is ongoing, meaning the researchers will follow up with the study cohort in the future.

In this first follow-up report on the COSMOS cohort, participants reported using mostly phones on a 2G and/or 3G network.

"Future updates of the COSMOS cohort on cancer outcomes will provide additional information on potential long-term effects of RF-EMF from more recent technology," the authors wrote.

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Telecom industry provided money, input

Three Swedish telecommunications companies — Ericsson, TeliaSonera and Telenor — provided funding for the COSMOS study data collection, according to the authors' funding statement.

"The study appears to have been initiated by Ericsson and the Swedish scientists at KI," the Karolinska Institutet, a major medical university in Sweden, Nilsson said.

Ericsson representatives in 2005 contacted Karolinska Institutet researchers Anders Ahlbom and Maria Feychting, she said. "They agreed to collaborate on a research project, with industry paying 50% of the costs."

A 2012 report by the Swedish weekly magazine, Ny Teknik, revealed that the industry representatives and researchers had discussed arrangements and funding before turning to Vinnova, a Swedish governmental research agency, to draw up an agreement that ostensibly guaranteed COSMOS' scientific independence from the industry, Nilsson said.

"In 2005," she continued, "when the researchers and Ericsson started meeting, Ericsson made certain demands on 'quality criteria' and had views on the design of the study, according to Christer Törnevik, head of research at Ericsson."

According to the funding section, the authors who were involved in acquiring funding for the study also contributed to the study concept — meaning that researchers who secured the money made seminal decisions about what the study would look at and what it would not look at.

Moreover, initially COSMOS was supported for five years by the U.K.'s Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research program, jointly funded by the U.K. Department of Health and the mobile telecommunications industry, the funding section said.

Several other telecom industry entities — including Nokia, Elisa and the Mobile Manufacturers' Forum — also contributed to COSMOS.

The study also received funding from the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, the Danish Strategic Research Council, Finland's National Technology Agency, the Yrjö Jahnsson Foundation, the Kone Foundation, the U.K. Department of Health & Social Care, and the U.K.'s National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Research Unit and The Netherlands Organization for Health Research.

Feychting, the study's lead author, did not respond when asked by The Defender what she would like to tell people who are concerned that industry influences may have biased the research.

She also did not comment on the allegation that the study's findings lacked credibility.

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Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.

Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D., is a reporter and researcher for The Defender based in Fairfield, Iowa.

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r2bzjudge
8 days ago

Who is buttering the bread? "...funding by the telecommunications industry..."

One virtually has to take it as a given these days, that the funder determines the outcome of the study.

5 0 Reply

Polly Green
8 days ago edited

My brother died of glioblastoma multiform in 2009. His house was wired using cables not WiFi. But he traveled a great deal and was on his cell phone hours everyday. He went to a neurologist about his headaches but the doctor wrote him off as a crank. Six months later he was giving a speech at an industry conference in Denver and passed out mid-sentence. He was diagnosed in the ER, and because it was a week before Thanksgiving, he couldn't get into a neurosurgeon back in Atlanta until the end the January. He died six months later. I'm still angry about the time we lost with him (as is his wife and kids). If the first doctor had sent him for imaging.... He didn't even have a microwave in his house, and had never even had an x-ray. He was convinced it was from the phone use.
And does ANYBODY believe a thing these people say anymore??

4 0 Reply

Peter van der Stam → Polly Green
5 days ago

Money, money money it is so funny in a corrupt world.

0 0 Reply

Gary Brown
8 days ago

Like smoking tobacco never caused lung cancer until it did!

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3 0 Reply

Greebo
7 days ago

Cell phones MUST emit powerful signals to reach the cell towers! How else could they transmit information? Holding such a powerful transmitted next to your brain, for many hours a day or week, is bound to affect your brain cells. They are being radiated from close quarters daily for hours if you use these often, or for long periods of time. That should be obvious.
Children even have thinner skulls between the transmitter & their brain cells. How could they not be affected. Has no one noticed how brain cancers have suddenly increased dramatically in children after cell phones became popular?
Are you going to believe (Belief is for religion not science.) dubious "studies" funded by mystery corporations who decide what sources are used, or your own logic and known data? Corporations & government paying for bogus studies is not a new thing. Remember the bogus studies on hydroxychloroquine using the wrong doses or on patients *already* dying from things like cancer & aids? Or the bogus studies to oppose the careful studies done by Linus Pauling on vitamin C?
This is serious. You need to KNOW not believe. Use your brain while you still have one.

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1 0 Reply

Pat Ormsby → Greebo
7 days ago

Actually, it isn't the power that helps signals reach cell towers. It's their coherence--their ability to carry information and hold it together with fidelity until it reaches the receiver. Panagopoulus et al. (2021) found that it is the very properties that enable radio waves to carry enormous amounts of data that also make them more biologically reactive. This is why we get a new crop of EHS each time a new generation of wireless technology is rolled out. Birds and insects disappear progressively with each new technology imposed on them. This is why the distant 5G satellites broadcasting this everywhere are such a concern, and the biggest fear is they will entrain the Earth's natural electric circuit, in which case no ocean will be deep enough to protect life.
Cancer, frankly, is a concern decades down the road. But on the other hand, we see all these turbocancers now, and not all of the victims were vaccinated or even closely involved with someone who was.

0 0 Reply

Greebo → Pat Ormsby
6 days ago

Nice try, but the cell phone MUST send out energy to transmit its messages. There are no little messenger faeries to carry them. Radio waves ARE energy, like microwaves only different in frequency. Coherence just makes them more efficient, like soldiers marching over a bridge who need to break step so the bride does not fall. It is only logical that the cells nearby are affected by the energy. They do raise the temperature as well as have the ability to damage any DNA that happens to be hit by them. The more often & the longer time you use them the greater the risk.
We also have data showing that brain cancers ,which were once very rare, began to skyrocket after cell phones became common. Now many people walk around with them appearing to be glued to their heads.
Yes the Plandemic UNTESTED jabs are certainly adding to a huge wave of cancers worldwide also. I keep my phone away from my body or in a case that clocks its signals & only use it with the speaker. every inch distance from you decreases the energy by the square of that distance.

0 0 Reply

Dioné Johnson
7 days ago

What a lot of hogwash!! As someone suffering with an Acoustic neuroma, how do they discount anyone with a brain tumor. Those are their target group!! Sick of the manipulation of data to boost profits. What BS!! A study should be struck off soon as there is a conflict of interest...

1 0 Reply

Peter van der Stam → Dioné Johnson
5 days ago

That last sentence is the correct one. It only means : we are NOT getting any false information anymore. Can you recall any science Pharma or other BIG business where there is NO conflict of interest.??

0 0 Reply

Pat Ormsby
7 days ago

See, what'd I tell you? Safe and effective!

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